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A priori Inequalities in $L^\infty(\Omega)$ for Solutions of Elliptic Equations in Unbounded Domains.

MAURIZIO CHICCO - MARINA VENTURINO(*)

ABSTRACT - We prove some a priori inequalities in $L^\infty(\Omega)$ for subsolutions of elliptic equations in divergence form, with Dirichlet's boundary conditions, in unbounded domains.

1. Introduction.

In an open subset Ω of $\mathbb{R}^n$, not necessarily bounded, we consider a linear uniformly elliptic second order operator in variational form with discontinuous coefficients, associated to the bilinear form

$$(1) \quad a(u, v) = \int_{\Omega} \left\{ \sum_{i,j=1}^n a_{ij} u_{x_i} v_{x_j} + \sum_{i=1}^n (b_i u_{x_i} v + d_i u v_{x_i}) + cuv \right\} dx$$

If $u \in H^1(\Omega)$ is a solution of the inequality

$$(2) \quad a(u, v) \leq \int_{\Omega} \left\{ f_0 v + \sum_{i=1}^n f_i v_{x_i} \right\} dx \quad \forall v \in C_0^1(\Omega), \quad v \geq 0 \text{ in } \Omega,$$

we can consider the problem of determining the minimal hypotheses on the coefficients b_i , d_i , c of the bilinear form (1) and on the known functions f_i ($i = 0, 1, \dots, n$) for the subsolution u to be (essentially) bounded from above in Ω . Such a problem was already studied e.g. in [2] and [3],

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where an inequality of the kind

$$(3) \quad \operatorname{ess\,sup}_{\Omega} u \leq \max(0, \max_{\partial\Omega} u) + K_1 \left\{ \|f_0\|_{L^{p/2}(\Omega)} + \sum_{i=1}^n \|f_i\|_{L^p(\Omega)} \right\} + K_2 \|u\|_{L^2(\Omega)}$$

was proved, by supposing Ω bounded and $f_i, d_i \in L^p(\Omega)$ ($i = 1, 2, \dots, n$), $f_0, c \in L^{p/2}(\Omega)$, $p > n$.

The aim of the present work is to extend these results first of all allowing the set Ω to be unbounded and relaxing the hypotheses on the functions f_0, f_i, b_i, d_i, c ($i = 1, 2, \dots, n$). Finally, the constants in the a priori inequality (3) are explicitly evaluated.

2. Notations and Hypotheses.

Let Ω be an open subset (bounded or unbounded) of $\mathbb{R}^n$. Let $a_{ij} \in L^\infty(\Omega)$ ($i, j = 1, 2, \dots, n$), $\sum_{i,j=1}^n a_{ij} t_i t_j \geq \nu |t|^2 \forall t \in \mathbb{R}^n$ a.e. in Ω , where ν is a positive constant. Let $c^+ := \max(c, 0)$, $c^- := \min(c, 0)$ and suppose that $c^+ \in L^{2n/(n+2)}(\Omega')$ for any Ω' bounded, $\Omega' \subset \Omega$. Let us define the spaces

$$(4) \quad X^p(\Omega) := \{f \in L_{\text{loc}}^p(\Omega) : \omega(f, p, \delta) < +\infty \quad \forall \delta > 0\}$$

$$(5) \quad X_0^p(\Omega) := \{f \in X^p(\Omega) : \lim_{\delta \rightarrow 0^+} \omega(f, p, \delta) = 0\}$$

where

$$(6) \quad \omega(f, p, \delta) := \sup \{ \|f\|_{L^p(E)} : E \text{ measurable}, E \subset \Omega, \operatorname{meas}(E) \leq \delta \}.$$

REMARK 1. If $f \in L_{\text{loc}}^p(\Omega)$, we define, for $k > 0$,

$$(7) \quad \phi(f, p, k) := \inf \{ \operatorname{meas}(E) : E \text{ measurable}, E \subset \Omega, \|f\|_{L^p(E)} \geq k \},$$

and we have

$$(8) \quad f \in X^p(\Omega) \quad \text{if and only if} \quad \exists k_0 > 0 \text{ such that } \phi(f, p, k_0) > 0,$$

$$(9) \quad f \in X_0^p(\Omega) \quad \text{if and only if} \quad \phi(f, p, k) > 0 \quad \forall k > 0.$$

REMARK 2. If G is a measurable subset of Ω such that $\operatorname{meas}(G) \leq \phi(f, p, k)$, then it turns out that $\|f\|_{L^p(G)} \leq k$. In fact, if not there would

exist a subset G_0 of G with positive measure but so small that

$$\|f\|_{L^p(G \setminus G_0)} > k$$

which is in contradiction with the definition of ϕ , since $\text{meas}(G \setminus G_0) < \text{meas}(G)$. ■

REMARK 3. If $1 \leq q < p$ it turns out $X^p(\Omega) \subset X_q^q(\Omega)$.

In fact, if $E \subset \Omega$, $\text{meas}(E) \leq \delta$, $f \in X^p(\Omega)$ we have

$$\|f\|_{L^q(E)} \leq \|f\|_{L^p(E)} [\text{meas}(E)]^{(p-q)/pq} \leq \omega(f, p, \delta) \delta^{(p-q)/pq}$$

whence

$$\omega(f, q, \delta) \leq \omega(f, p, \delta) \delta^{(p-q)/pq}. \quad \blacksquare$$

We denote by S the constant in the Sobolev inequality

$$\|g\|_{L^{2n/(n-2)}(\mathbb{R}^n)} \leq S \|g_x\|_{L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)} \quad \forall g \in C_0^1(\mathbb{R}^n).$$

It is a well known fact (see e.g. [4]) that S is given by the following formula:

$$(10) \quad S = [n(n-2)\pi]^{-1/2} \Gamma(n)^{1/n} \Gamma(n/2)^{-1/n}.$$

LEMMA. Let $u \in H_0^1(\Omega)$, $B \subset \Omega$, $u = 0$ in B . Then there exists a sequence $\{u_j\}_{j \in \mathbb{N}} \subset H_0^1(\Omega)$ such that $u_j = 0$ in B , u_j has compact support in Ω ($j = 1, 2, \dots$), $\lim_j \|u - u_j\|_{H^1(\Omega)} = 0$.

PROOF. It follows from the results of [3] that $u^+ := \max(u, 0)$, $u^- := \min(u, 0)$ both belong to $H_0^1(\Omega)$, therefore we may assume without loss of generality that $u \geq 0$ in Ω . By definition of $H_0^1(\Omega)$, there exists a sequence $\{\phi_j\}_{j \in \mathbb{N}} \subset C_0^1(\Omega)$ such that $\lim_j \|u - \phi_j\|_{H^1(\Omega)} = 0$; we may assume $\phi_j \geq 0$ in Ω ($j = 1, 2, \dots$). Consider the functions $u_j := \min(u, \phi_j)$ ($j = 1, 2, \dots$). These functions are in $H_0^1(\Omega)$ and they vanish on B and where $\phi_j = 0$. Furthermore it is easy to verify that $|(u - u_j)_x| \leq |(u - \phi_j)_x|$ where all the derivatives exist (i.e. almost everywhere in Ω), whence

$$(11) \quad \|(u - u_j)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \leq \|(u - \phi_j)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \quad (j = 1, 2, \dots).$$

Therefore the sequence $\{u_j\}_{j \in \mathbb{N}}$ has the required properties. ■

3. Main result.

THEOREM. *In addition to the hypotheses mentioned above, we assume: $p > n$, $c^- \in X_0^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega)$, $b_i \in X_0^n(\Omega)$, $d_i \in X_0^p(\Omega)$, $f_i \in X^p(\Omega)$ ($i = 1, 2, \dots, n$), $f_0 \in X^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega)$, $u \in H_{loc}^1(\Omega)$,*

$$(12) \quad a(u, v) \leq \int_{\Omega} \left\{ f_0 v + \sum_{i=1}^n f_i v_{x_i} \right\} dx \quad \forall v \in C_0^1(\Omega), \quad v \geq 0 \text{ in } \Omega.$$

Furthermore suppose that there exists a nonnegative real number m such that $\max(u - m, 0) \in H_0^1(\Omega)$.

Then there exist constants K_1, K_2, K_3 , depending on the coefficients of $a(\cdot, \cdot)$, on n and p , such that

$$(13) \quad \operatorname{ess\,sup}_{\Omega} u \leq K_1 \|\max(u - m, 0)\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + 2^{np/(p-n)} m + \\ + K_2 \left\{ S\omega(f_0, np/(p+n), K_3) + \sum_{i=1}^n \omega(f_i, p, K_3) \right\}$$

where:

$$\begin{aligned} S &\text{ is the Sobolev constant (10),} \\ K_1 &= (4/3)^{np/(p-n)} + 2^{np/(p-n)} K_3^{-1/2}, \\ K_2 &= (3S/\nu)[2^{np/(p-n)} - 1], \\ K_3 &= \min \{1, \phi(b_i, n, \nu/(6Sn)), \phi(d_i, p, \nu/(6Sn)), \phi(c^-, np/(p+n), \nu/(6S^2)) \\ &\quad (i = 1, 2, \dots, n) \} \end{aligned}$$

PROOF. First of all we notice that if $t \geq m$ obviously the function $u_t := \max(u - t, 0)$ is in $H_0^1(\Omega)$ as well. Moreover, it is easy to check that (12) is verified also by nonnegative functions $v \in H_0^1(\Omega)$ with compact support contained in Ω . In fact, let A be an open bounded set containing the support of v , such that $\bar{A} \subset \Omega$. It is easy to find a sequence $\{v_j\}_{j \in \mathbb{N}} \subset C_0^1(A)$ which converges to v in the norm of $H^1(A)$. We can write (12) with v_j instead of v and let j go to infinity, taking into account Hölder's and Sobolev's inequalities and the fact that $u \in H^1(A)$ by hypothesis (and also $u \in L^{2n/(n-2)}(A)$). So, (12) is true if $v \in H_0^1(\Omega)$ with compact support contained in Ω . Then from the lemma above we can find a sequence of functions $\{u_j\}_{j \in \mathbb{N}} \subset H_0^1(\Omega)$ having compact support in Ω , vanishing where $u_t = 0$ (i.e. where $u \leq t$), and converging to u_t in the norm of $H^1(\Omega)$. As before, we can write (12) with u_j instead of v and let j go to infinity, because u_t and u_j are different from zero only in a (fixed) set of finite measure, in which $u = u_t + t$, thus allowing again the use of Hölder's

and Sobolev's inequalities. We conclude that (12) can be written with v replaced by u_t (where it is always $t \geq m$). Let us denote for brevity

$$\Omega_t := \{x \in \Omega : u(x) > t\}.$$

By using Hölder's and Sobolev's inequalities, and taking into account our previous hypotheses, we deduce

$$\begin{aligned} \nu \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}^2 &\leq \sum_{i=1}^n \int_{\Omega_t} a_{ij} u_{x_i}(u_t)_{x_j} dx, \\ \left| \int_{\Omega} \sum_{i=1}^n b_i u_{x_i} u_t dx \right| &\leq \sum_{i=1}^n \int_{\Omega_t} |b_i(u_t)_{x_i} u_t| dx \leq S \sum_{i=1}^n \|b_i\|_{L^n(\Omega_t)} \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}^2, \\ \left| \int_{\Omega} \sum_{i=1}^n d_i u(u_t)_{x_i} dx \right| &\leq \sum_{i=1}^n \int_{\Omega_t} |d_i u_t(u_t)_{x_i}| dx + t \sum_{i=1}^n \int_{\Omega_t} |d_i(u_t)_{x_i}| dx \leq \\ &\leq S \sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-n)/np} \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}^2 + \\ &\quad + t \sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-2)/2p} \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}, \\ \left| \int_{\Omega} c^- u u_t dx \right| &\leq \int_{\Omega_t} |c^- u_t^2| dx + t \int_{\Omega_t} |c^- u_t| dx \leq \\ &\leq S^2 \|c^-\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-n)/np} \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)} + \\ &\quad + t S \|c^-\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-2)/2p} \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}, \\ \left| \int_{\Omega} f_0 u_t dx \right| &\leq S \|f_0\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-2)/2p} \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}, \\ \left| \int_{\Omega} \sum_{i=1}^n f_i(u_t)_{x_i} dx \right| &\leq \sum_{i=1}^n \|f_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-2)/2p} \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}. \end{aligned}$$

Therefore it follows easily from (12)

$$\begin{aligned} (14) \quad \nu \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}^2 &\leq \\ &\leq t \left[\sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} + S \|c^-\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} \right] (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-2)/2p} \|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)} + \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
& + \left[S \|f_0\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} + \sum_{i=1}^n \|f_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} \right] (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-2)/2p} \|(\mathcal{U}_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)} + \\
& + S \left[\sum_{i=1}^n \|b_i\|_{L^n(\Omega_t)} + \sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-n)/np} \right] \|(\mathcal{U}_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}^2 + \\
& + S^2 \|c^-\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} (\text{meas } \Omega_t)^{(p-n)/np} \|(\mathcal{U}_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)}^2.
\end{aligned}$$

For brevity, let us denote $\alpha(t) := \text{meas } (\Omega_t)$. Then we get

$$\begin{aligned}
(15) \quad & \left\{ \nu - S \left[\sum_{i=1}^n \|b_i\|_{L^n(\Omega_t)} + \sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} [\alpha(t)]^{(p-n)/np} + \right. \right. \\
& \left. \left. + S \|c^-\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} [\alpha(t)]^{(p-n)/np} \right] \right\} \|(\mathcal{U}_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)} \leq \\
& \leq \left[S \|f_0\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} + \sum_{i=1}^n \|f_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} \right] [\alpha(t)]^{(p-2)/2p} + \\
& + t \left[\sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} + S \|c^-\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} \right] [\alpha(t)]^{(p-2)/2p}.
\end{aligned}$$

We notice that, when $t \geq m$, we have

$$\int_{\Omega_m} (u-m)^2 dx \geq \int_{\Omega_t} (u-m)^2 dx \geq (t-m)^2 \alpha(t)$$

that is:

$$(16) \quad \alpha(t) \leq \frac{\|u_m\|_{L^2(\Omega_m)}^2}{(t-m)^2} \quad \forall t > m.$$

Now we define (see (7))

$$\begin{aligned}
(17) \quad \delta_0 &:= \min \{1, \phi(b_i, n, \nu/(6Sn)), \phi(d_i, p, \nu/(6S^2n)), \\
& \phi(c^-, np/(n+p), \nu/(6S^2)), (i=1, 2, \dots, n)\}
\end{aligned}$$

$$(18) \quad t_0 := m + \frac{\|u_m\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2}{\delta_0^{1/2}}$$

(please note that $\delta_0 > 0$ because of our previous hypotheses and remark 1).

Then if $t \geq t_0$ we have

$$(19) \quad \alpha(t) \leq \alpha(t_0) \leq \frac{\|u_m\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2}{(t_0-m)^2} = \delta_0$$

therefore by the definition of ϕ and remark 2 we deduce

$$(20) \quad \sum_{i=1}^n \|b_i\|_{L^n(\Omega_t)} \leq \nu/(6S),$$

$$(21) \quad \sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} \leq \nu/(6S),$$

$$(22) \quad \|c - \|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} \leq \nu/(6S^2).$$

From (16), (17), (19) it follows $\alpha(t) \leq 1$; then from (15), (20), (21), (22) when $t \geq t_0$ we get

$$(23) \quad (\nu/2)\|(u_t)_x\|_{L^2(\Omega_t)} \leq [\alpha(t)]^{(p-2)/2p} \left[t \left(\sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} + S\|c - \|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} \right) + S\|f_0\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_t)} + \sum_{i=1}^n \|f_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_t)} \right].$$

Let us denote, for brevity,

$$(24) \quad K_4 := (2S/\nu) \left(\sum_{i=1}^n \|d_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_{t_0})} + S\|c - \|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_{t_0})} \right)$$

$$(25) \quad K_5 := (2S/\nu) \left(\sum_{i=1}^n \|f_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_{t_0})} + S\|f_0\|_{L^{np/(n+p)}(\Omega_{t_0})} \right)$$

and apply Hölder's and Sobolev's inequalities to (23), thus obtaining

$$(26) \quad \|u_t\|_{L^1(\Omega_t)} \leq [\alpha(t)]^{(2+n)/2n} \|u_t\|_{L^{2n/(n-2)}(\Omega_t)} \leq [\alpha(t)]^{1+(p-n)/np} (K_4 t + K_5)$$

Now we follow a procedure of [1]. Define

$$(27) \quad \beta(t) := \|u_t\|_{L^1(\Omega_t)}, \quad t \geq t_0$$

and note that it turns out $\beta(t) = \int_t^{+\infty} \alpha(s) ds$. Therefore

$$(28) \quad \beta'(t) = -\alpha(t) \leq 0 \quad \text{a.e. in } [t_0, +\infty).$$

From (26), (28) we get the differential inequality

$$(29) \quad \beta(t) \leq (K_4 t + K_5) [-\beta'(t)]^{1+(p-n)/np} \quad \text{a.e. in } [t_0, +\infty)$$

Suppose now, by contradiction, that $\beta(t) > 0 \forall t \geq t_0$ (i.e., by definition of

$\beta(t)$, $\text{ess sup}_\Omega u = +\infty$). Then in (29) we can divide by $\beta(t)$ obtaining

$$(30) \quad -\beta'(t)[\beta(t)]^{-np/(np+p-n)} \geq (K_4 t + K_5)^{-np/(np+p-n)}$$

Integrating (30) between t_0 and $t^* > t_0$ (suppose for the moment $K_4 > 0$), we obtain

$$(31) \quad K_4[\beta(t_0)]^{(p-n)/(np+p-n)} - K_4[\beta(t^*)]^{(p-n)/(np+p-n)} \geq \\ \geq (K_4 t^* + K_5)^{(p-n)/(np+p-n)} - (K_4 t_0 + K_5)^{(p-n)/(np+p-n)}$$

which gives a contradiction when t^* tends to $+\infty$.

Then it must be $\text{ess sup}_\Omega u < +\infty$. We can rewrite (31) with $t_0 < t^* < \text{ess sup}_\Omega u$; by letting t^* tend to $\text{ess sup}_\Omega u$ we get

$$(32) \quad (K_4 \text{ess sup}_\Omega u + K_5)^{(p-n)/(np+p-n)} \leq \\ \leq (K_4 t_0 + K_5)^{(p-n)/(np+p-n)} + K_4[\beta(t_0)]^{(p-n)/(np+p-n)}$$

Please note that the constant K_4 is not greater than $2/3$ because of (21), (22). From (32) by easy calculations we get

$$(33) \quad \text{ess sup}_\Omega u \leq (4/3)^{np/(p-n)} \|u_{t_0}\|_{L^1(\Omega_{t_0})} + 2^{np/(p-n)} t_0 + (3/2)[2^{np/(p-n)} - 1] K_5$$

whence, by recalling the definition of t_0 (18) and K_5 (25) one can write

$$(34) \quad \text{ess sup}_\Omega u \leq 2^{np/(p-n)} m + [(4/3)^{np/(p-n)} + 2^{np/(p-n)} \delta_0^{-1/2}] \|u_m\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + \\ + (3S/\nu)[2^{np/(p-n)} - 1] \left[S \|f_0\|_{L^{np/(p+n)}(\Omega_{t_0})} + \sum_{i=1}^n \|f_i\|_{L^p(\Omega_{t_0})} \right].$$

Finally, by taking into account (19), the definition of δ_0 (see (17)) and the functions ϕ , ω , we conclude

$$(35) \quad \text{ess sup}_\Omega u \leq 2^{np/(p-n)} m + [(4/3)^{np/(p-n)} + 2^{np/(p-n)} \delta_0^{-1/2}] \|u_m\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + \\ + (3S/\nu)[2^{np/(p-n)} - 1] \left[S\omega(f_0, np/(p+n), \delta_0) + \sum_{i=1}^n \omega(f_i, p, \delta_0) \right]$$

with δ_0 given by (17). ■

REMARK 4. If we suppose, in addition to the hypotheses of the previous theorem, that there exists $q \geq 1$ such that $u_m \in L^q(\Omega)$, then we can

write, instead of (16) and (18)

$$(16') \quad \alpha(t) \leq \|u_m\|_{L^{q(\Omega_m)}}^q (t - m)^{-q} \quad \forall t > m,$$

$$(18') \quad t_0 := m + \|u_m\|_{L^{q(\Omega)}} \delta_0^{-1/q}$$

and proceeding as before we get to the conclusion in the form

$$(35') \quad \operatorname{ess\,sup}_\Omega u \leq 2^{np/(p-n)} m + [(4/3)^{np/(p-n)} + 2^{np/(p-n)} \delta_0^{-1/q}] \|u_m\|_{L^{q(\Omega)}} + \\ + (3S/\nu)[2^{np/(p-n)} - 1] \left[S\omega(f_0, np/(p+n), \delta_0) + \sum_{i=1}^n \omega(f_i, p, \delta_0) \right]$$

where δ_0 is always given by (17).

REMARK 5. Suppose the coefficients d_i and c^- of the bilinear form $a(\cdot, \cdot)$ to be identically zero. Then the constant K_4 defined in (24) vanishes, and by integrating (30) we get, more simply,

$$(36) \quad \operatorname{ess\,sup}_\Omega u \leq t_0 + (np + p - n)/(p - n) K_5^{np/(np + p - n)} \|u_{t_0}\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^{(p-n)/(np + p - n)}$$

whence, by taking into account the definitions of t_0 , δ_0 , ..., and Young's inequality, we deduce

$$(37) \quad \operatorname{ess\,sup}_\Omega u \leq m + (\delta_0^{-1/2} + 1) \|u_m\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + [np/(p - n)] K_5.$$

This inequality is of the same kind of (35), but the coefficient of m in it is now 1.

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